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MONASTIC LIBRARIES

by

MARY HARRIETT KITTREDGE

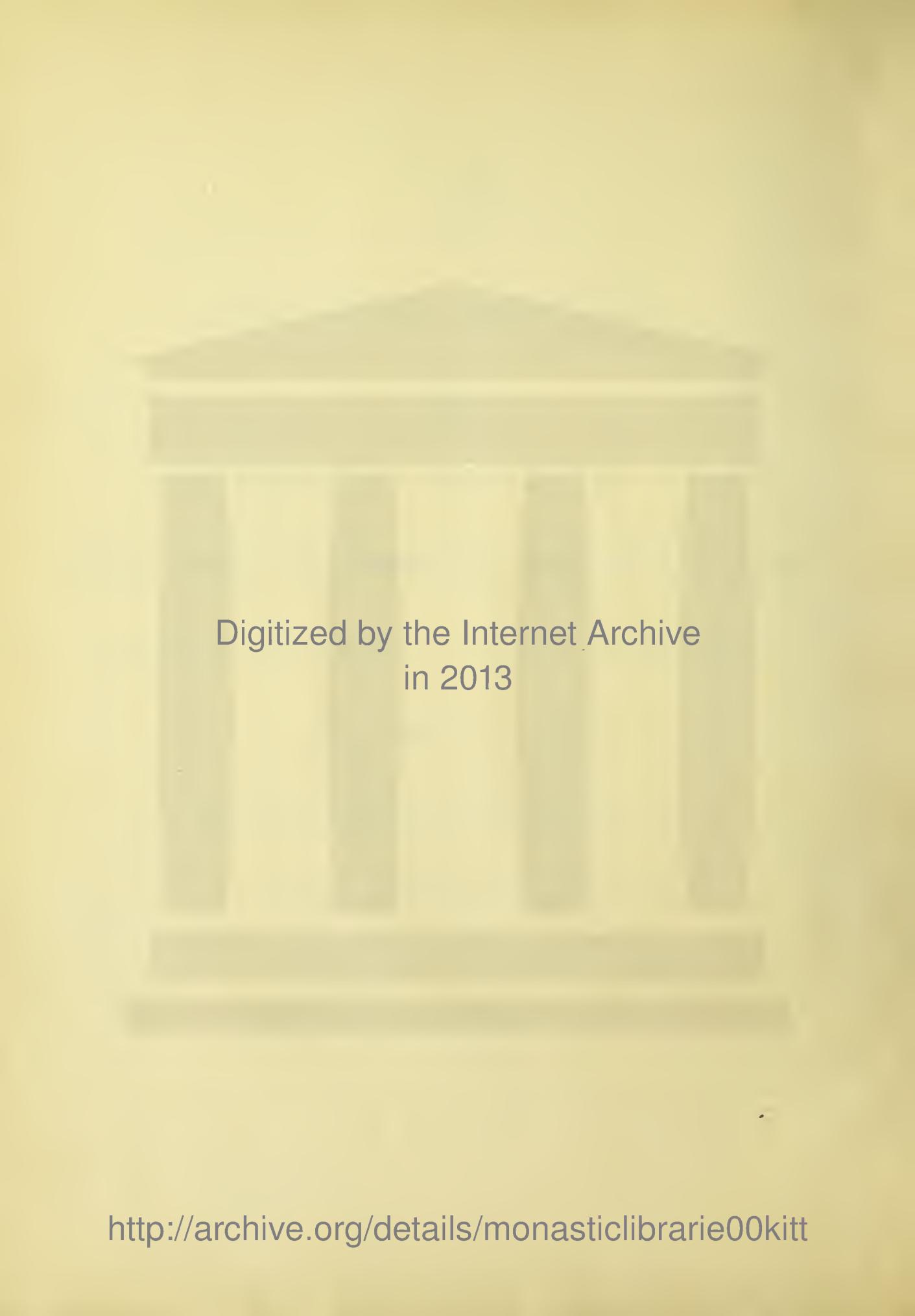
THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

IN THE STATE LIBRARY SCHOOL

in the

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A very faint, light-colored watermark of a classical building with four columns and a triangular pediment is visible in the background.

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Mary Harriett Kittredge  
ENTITLED Monastic libraries

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF Bachelor of Library science

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## INTRODUCTION

The following material on the Monastic libraries was taken from the Chicago Public Library, the Newberry Library and the Library of the University of Illinois. Although the importance of monastic libraries has long been realized the matter given concerning them has been surprisingly general and unvaried. In many cases the material given has lacked detail and in those instances where writers have given detailed accounts of the different topics upon the subject of monastic libraries the same ground has been covered by two or three of these writers. Because the transcribing of manuscripts and later the work in book making formed an important part in monastic discipline it has seemed advisable to give a somewhat brief account of the origin and of the routine of monastic life showing at the same time the development of monastic libraries from the time when transcribing was first begun until it and book-making formed one of the principal parts of the life of the monks. Also it has seemed advisable to give a description of an old monastic church since throughout the history of monastic libraries the church contained the libraries.



## MONASTIC LIBRARIES

Although monachism had obscure beginnings and although there has been some doubts as to its founder the most and best authorities agree that monasticism originated in upper Egypt. Here in the mountainous desert on the east of the Nile Valley monks lived in little hermitages rudely piled up of stones or hollowed out of the mountain side. Originally these ascetics, although living in the same neighborhood, were independent of each other having no common rule of life, praying, fasting and working each as he pleased. Gradually but quite naturally these anchorites acquired the habit of gathering about some especially famous and sainted hermit. In this way grew up villages of monks, each monk still living in his own separate hut but having for the first time a spiritual head.

The begin-  
nings of  
monachism.

The next step in the development of monachism was the community living together in one building under the rule of an abbot to whom the monks owed obedience and by whose orders they regulated their devotions and labor. The authorship of this coenobite system is attributed to St. Anthony of Egypt. The creation of the monasteries inaugurated by St. Anthony in the deserts soon spread to the towns and thus necessitated some regulation of the life of the monks. The first written code of the laws for the government of this monastic life was drawn up by Pachomius of Thebaid thus giving to Christian monachism organization and law.

The rise of  
the coenobites

The next great figure in the history of Eastern monasticism was Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea in Cap-

The difference  
between Eastern  
and Western  
monachism.



padocia in the latter part of the fourth century who introduced monachism into Asia Minor from whence it spread into the East. Almost from the first a marked difference was apparent between the Eastern and the Western monasticism; a difference due both to climate and to race constitution. Such exposure and such severe austerities as marked the lives of the Eastern monks were impossible in the more rugged climate of the West; and a life of contemplation and of bodily inactivity never found the same favor among the Europeans as the Asiatics. The result was that the Western hermits satisfied themselves with less extreme asceticism than the Eastern recluses and in their activity have always done more work and have taken more active part in affairs of the world than they. Almost from the formation of Western monasticism the monks spent much time in study and early the Western monasteries became the educational and literary centres of the world.

The most important figure in the history of early Western monasticism was Benedict of Nursia who in 529 A.D. founded the famous monastery of Monte Cassino between Rome and Naples. St. Benedict founded the first regular monastic order and gave to his order and through it to the Western monachism in general a definite rule, which in time supplanted all others. To the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity he added that of manual labor and laid down a daily routine of monastic life.

In 590 the passive idea of Eastern monachism was supplemented and in many cases was supplanted by active missionary ideas. In the latter part of the sixth century Cassiodorus made his monastery of Vivarium a center of classical and theological learning and thus gave to Western monachism intellectual impulse which it never lost. Throughout the Middle

St. Benedict  
of Nursia.

The active  
idea of mon-  
achism.



Ages monasteries were the centers of learning and the only theological seminaries that the Western Church possessed.

With the development of monasticism came the development in the form of the habitations of the monks. The early idea of monachism was the complete seclusion of the individual from all other individuals, for the sole purpose of fasting and prayer, thus making a single but sufficient for the hermit. The later idea was the seclusion from the world not only of the individual but of a body of monks under one head, who did not as in the earlier days wholly give themselves up to spiritual contemplation, but devoted a greater part of their time to manual labor and reading. This development necessitated a provision for a common abode and place of worship, so that as early as the third century the monks lived in conventional buildings, the principal one of which was the church.

The development of the homes of the monks.

This church was almost always a cross church with nave and aisles and a central tower, which in the Cistercian churches only rose one story above the roof. There were also transepts, which usually contained three chapels, a choir, with or without aisles, and a retro-choir. The cloister was usually situated on the south side of the nave of the church, but sometimes for reasons of convenience the cloister occupied the north side, in which case the relative position of the other buildings was similarly transposed. The chapter house, always on the east side of the court, was a large handsome rectangular building with a great deal of architectural ornament. The libraries were usually located in the cloisters of the church, but as collections of books grew too large for the cloisters, the libraries were moved to the more roomy chapter houses.

The monastic church.



Before the time of Benedict the hermits devoted all their spare time to tending the farms connected with the monasteries, but with the Benedictine rule was introduced external labor, either manual or literary. The routine of the monastic day of the Benedictine orders was to include seven hours for manual labor and two hours for reading as is shown in the forty-eighth chapter of the Rule of St. Benedict where it says: "Idleness is the enemy of the soul: hence brethren ought, at certain seasons to occupy themselves with manual labor and again at certain hours with holy reading. Therefore between Easter and the Calends of October let them apply themselves to reading from the fourth till near the sixth hour. After the sixth hour when they rise from the table let them rest on their beds in complete silence; or if anyone should wish to read to himself let him do so in such a way as not to disturb anyone else. From the Calends of October to the beginning of Lent let them apply themselves to reading until the second hour. During Lent let them apply themselves to reading from morning until the end of the third hour, and in these days of Lent let them receive a book apiece from the library and read it straight through."

It thus followed that this injunction to read, an injunction given at a time when books were so very few and monks were becoming so very numerous, rendered instruction for writing necessary until copies of the books prescribed should be of sufficient number to meet the requirement of the readers. The result was that scribe work, which consisted chiefly not in the production of original literature but in the reproduction and preservation of the literature that had come down from earlier writers, was accepted not only as a part of the "manual labor" prescribed in the rule, but was not infrequently received (as in the case of skilled

The rule of  
St. Benedict.

The introduction  
of transcribing  
manuscripts.



monks) in lieu of some portion of the routine of religious life.

There has been some question as to whether this transcribing was done by the monks each having a copy in hand from which he worked, or whether some one monk did not dictate to several monks at once, each of these monks making a transcription. Knittel claims that it would have been impracticable for the monks to write from dictation owing both to the great slowness with which the writing was done and to the different degree of rapidity on the part of the different scribes. Ebert takes the same ground as Knittel, but with some additional argument. He expresses the belief that when books were needed in haste the sheets to be copied were divided among the scribes, each monk transcribing a certain section. Ebert has found evidence of this division of work in several manuscripts in which different portions under the same cover plainly show that they are the work of different hands. Wattenbach, in support of this argument, has discovered other manuscripts in which there are not only different pages written in different script but in which there are different sections on the same page written in varying hands. Wattenbach states that in many cases these sections show that the space left for an interpolated chapter had been wrongly measured so that the script of such chapters had to be either stretched out to fill up the gap, or crowded together making in either case the spacing of the script of the interpolated passage different from that of the body of the book. However, West finds evidence in the later Middle Ages of monks writing from dictation and as proof of this statement he gives the following quotation taken from "Alcuin and the rise of the Christian schools." "In the intervals between the hours of prayer and the observance of round of cloister life come hours for the copying of

The question as to whether monks wrote from dictation or wrote directly from books



books under the presiding direction of Alcuin. The young monks file into the scriptorium and one of them is given the precious parchment volume containing a work of Bede or Isidore or Augustine or some portion of the Latin Scriptures or even a heathen author. He reads slowly and clearly at a measured rate while all the others seated at their desks take down his words, thus perhaps a score of copies are made at once." There is no doubt but that both of these methods in the manner of transcribing were followed but the weight of argument seems to point to the conclusion that dictation was not used in transcribing until the work of preparing manuscripts was transferred from the monasteries to the universities.

The transcribing carried on by the monks was done in a room known as the scriptorium, which consisted either of one large room or of separate little studies, called carrels, with a window to each compartment and with one side fully open to the cloister walls. The whole room or set of studies was under the general discipline of the monastery, but was under the supervision of a special officer known as the Armarius, whose duty it was to provide all necessary articles for transcribing, such as ink, parchment, pens, pumice-stones for smoothing the parchment, awls to give guiding marks for ruling lines, reading frames to hold the books to be copied, rulers and weights to keep down the pages.

The scriptorium.

The rules of the scriptorium were very stringent. Artificial light was entirely forbidden for fear of injuring the manuscripts. No one was allowed to enter the room besides scribes and the higher officers of the abbey. Absolute silence was enjoined, but as some method of communication was necessary there was a variety of signs. For instance, if a scribe

The rules of the scriptorium.



needed a book he extended his hands and made a motion as if he were turning over leaves. If he wanted a missal he superadded the sign of a crown (a reference to King David); if he wished a lectionary he pretended to wipe away grease; and finally if he wanted a pagan work he scratched his ear like a dog after he made the usual sign.

The process of the making of a book by these old monks of the Middle Ages is very interesting. After the armarius had provided all necessary utensils he took to the scribe the section of plain parchment which was to be written on, each sheet still separate from the others but loosely put in the order in which it was to be finally bound. First when the style and the general size of the intended writing had been decided upon the scribes had to rule the sheets. This he did by pricking holes with an awl or with a wheel with sharp teeth at equal distances down each side of the page. He then used a metal stilus to rule the lines across the sheet from point to point with others perpendicular to make the margins. The scribe then copied letter for letter the book which was open on a frame before him, being forbidden to make any alteration or correction in the text even when the original was obviously wrong. In these old manuscripts there was no paging but the whole work was divided into packets of parchment sheets each containing about four leaves, which were often times marked temporarily on the first page of the packet, but these marks were always cut off when the work was bound. At the end of each section of the leaves the scribes wrote the word with which the next section should commence, a practice continued by printers under the term of "catch word." If a manuscript contained several treatises on different subjects a list of contents was appended containing the initial letter of each tract and the number of sections. When a scribe had

The process  
of transcrib-  
ing



finished a quaternion another monk often compared his writing with the original copy. If the work was correct the sheets were then given to the rubricator, who inserted titles, concluding notes (called colophons), liturgical directions and list of chapters.

The manuscript next went to the illuminator or illustrator, who traced the outline with a pencil made of silver or brass with a silver point and then went over this metallic outline with a fine quill pen dipped in preparation of lamp black and gum. He next washed it in shades with ink and water of three degrees of strength, and then gilded it so that the burnishing would not interfere with the colors. Embossed gold grounds were executed by first laying metal leaf on a thick smooth bed of fine plaster carefully ground and then burnished. Then large masses of flat painted gilding was added and the colors were laid on with the greatest care as to tints. The last process, one which was entrusted only to the most experienced hands was that of penciling and inserting brilliant touches of gold and which, in fact, was the finishing of the whole book.

Illumination.

The idea of illumination is as old as the books themselves, but it was little used in the early times. At first certain letters, usually the first letter of a new sentence but sometimes the first letter of a new line, were simply made larger than the rest and perhaps colored. Next the ends and corners of such letters were exaggerated and ran over into the margin until later the whole margin was filled with off-shoots from one or more large letters. Finally the margin became formally separated from the letters and received a wholly independent design. Meanwhile room was found within a letter above the text or on a separate page for a miniature, which was the highest form of

The development of illumination.



illumination.

To return to the making of the book, after it had come from the illuminator it went to the binder. The binding common in the Middle Ages for books used in service of the church was plain or ornamented skins of deer, sheep and calf stretched over solid boards and sewed with strips of the same material, which formed four or five bands across the back. The finest books were bound in ivory, silver or even gold with sides carved or worked into embossed figures and set with jewels.

Transcribing flourished from the fourteenth century, but the difference between the manuscripts of the tenth and the fourteenth centuries was great. At first the scribes exercised the greatest care in making their writings beautifully clear, but as time went on they became more and more negligent and printing was discovered just in time to save the manuscripts from irremediable incorrectness and utter corruption.

The decline  
of the art  
of transcrib-  
ing.

From the early days monks showed a real passion for books and libraries and they did not spare time, money nor labor in securing rare manuscripts from different parts of the world. Bede in his biographies of abbots relates how Benedict travelled from Nursia to Rome five times between the years 653 and 684 for the sole purpose of increasing the literary supply of his abbey. Coelfied, a successor of Benedict, brought over from Italy sacred text of which he ordered three copies to be made, and then took another journey to Rome to offer to the library of the Holy See the best of these three copies. Again St. Columba an Irish monk and a collector of manuscripts spent the greater part of his time travelling about hunting up and either buying or copying rare and valuable works. A story is told about St. Columba's undertaking

The monks  
as book-  
collectors.



to make a hurried copy of an old Psalter belonging to his old master Finian. St Columba, for the purpose of transcribing this work, shut himself up in the church where the Psalter was deposited. A wanderer passing the church attracted by the light looked through the key-hole and while he was peeking he had his eye torn out by a crane. The wanderer went to Finian with his story. The Abbot became very indignant and claimed from Columba the copy which the monk had prepared contending that a copy made without permission ought to belong to the owner of the original on the ground that transcript is the offspring of the original work. This is the first instance occurring in the history of English literature of a contention for copyright. The monks still further increased their collections by making many copies of the works in their own monasteries, which they used first for the purpose of duplicating the books most used in their reference work and then for the purpose of exchanging for books in other monastic libraries. Often in England when new monasteries were founded the King would request the different abbeys to give to these new foundations copies of theological and religious books in their own collection. In some cases the King himself provided such books.

That libraries existed in the early as well as in the later days of monachism is proved by allusions made to them in the Fathers and by the early writers, but these allusions are general and say nothing of their size nor of their arrangement. The earliest of such libraries was the collection made at Jerusalem by Bishop Alexander at the beginning of the third century; another was that made by Origen of Caesarea forty years later, which was remarkable not only for its size but for the important manuscripts which it contained.

The libraries  
of Alexander  
and of Origen

The true library era of the Christian world began



early in the sixteenth century with the publication of the Rule of St Benedict. Wherever a Benedictine house arose or a monastery of any one of the orders, which were nothing more nor less than branches of the Benedictine tree, books were transcribed and multiplied, thus forming libraries small at first but increasing as monasteries developed. The Benedictines gave general directions for study; the Cluniacs prescribed the selection of a special officer to take care of the books; the Carthusians and Cistercians provided for the loan of books; the Augustinians went a step farther and prescribed the kind of press in which the books were to be kept as is shown in the following passage taken from "Customs of the Augustinian Priory of Barnwell" written toward the end of the thirteenth century: "The press in which books are kept must be lined inside with wool, that the damp of the walls may not moisten nor stain the books. This press should be divided vertically as well as horizontally by sundry partitions on which books may be arranged so as to be separated from one another, for fear they may be packed so close as to injure each other, or delay those who wish to use them."

At first a separate room was not given up to the library but books were stored in cases in the cloister, the only room where the monks were allowed to assemble for study and reading. During the mediaeval period the system was to devote to the double purpose of library and scriptorium a whole walk or alley of the cloister, usually that nearest the church, as that was the dryest and warmest portion of the church. Along one side of this alley were fixed against the wall oak cupboards, called armaria, with strong locks and hinges to receive the books which formed the library of the monastery. Down the middle of this alley a clear passage was left and the side opposite the bookcases

The library era began with the rule of St Benedict

Originally books were stored in the cloister.



was occupied at least in the fourteenth century and probably much earlier by a row of little wooden box-like rooms called carrels each of which was devoted to the use of one scribe. These little rooms were commonly made of wainscot oak about six by eight feet in plan; just large enough to hold the seated scribe and his large desk on which rested the manuscript he was transcribing and the one he was writing, with some extra shelf space for his writing utensils. These little rooms had wooden floors and ceilings so as to be warm and dry and were set close against the traceried windows, which in most cloisters ran all along the internal sides of the four alleys.

As collections increased books in the Benedictine houses were divided into two classes, one class being kept as a reference library, to use a modern term, the books being placed in cases in the cloister where monks could consult them, while the other class consisted of volumes lent out to the brethren to read. According to St Benedict a book from the library was given out to each of the ~~monks~~ each year. On the same day in the following year the hermit brought back his book and received another. On this day of return the librarian, custos librorum, laid down a carpet with all the books on it but those which he had lent the year before, which the brethren themselves were to bring back. Then the librarian read the conditions under which the books had been lent to the monks during that year and as each monk heard his name announced he returned his book and if he had not read the book "straight through" as the law prescribed he fell on his face, confessed his sin and entreated forgiveness. The librarian then made a fresh distribution of books.

As time went on and as collections still further increased, provision had to be made for the housing and

The reference  
and the  
loan library

The library  
finally occupied  
a separate  
room.



storing of books; a provision which was made in the Cistercian houses by devoting to the library one small square room, without a window, lined with bookcases on the walls and over the door. By the fifteenth century the larger monasteries had accumulated many hundreds of volumes as is illustrated by Christ Church Canterbury where the library consisted of 698 volumes. The result was that the small room, devoted for sometime to the storing of the books was not large enough for the collections and the books had to be packed in various parts of the monastery without order or selection in cases set up wherever a vacant corner could be found. This general confusion and great inconvenience naturally led to the provision for larger library quarters so that in the later and larger monasteries we find two or three rooms, one floor or sometimes even two floors of a conventional building devoted entirely to the storage of books.

These rooms of the mediaeval monastic library were usually long and narrow with equi-distant windows and with bookcases arranged at right angles with the walls in the spaces between each pair of windows, a method illustrated by the stack room of our modern library. In these rooms book-cases varied in style from those used in the early days when books were stored in the cloister in that cases with locked doors now gave place to an elongated lectern or desk of convenient height for a seated reader, with shelves either beneath or above according as to whether the books lay on their sides or stood upright. To still provide for the safety of the volumes and to take the place of the locked doors of the primitive book-cases, the books were chained to the desks. This system of chaining allowed books to be readily taken down and laid on the desk for reading as the chains were of different lengths

The interior  
of a monastic  
library



according to the distance of the shelf from the table. One end of the chain was attached to the middle of the upper edge of the right hand corner of the book while the other end was attached to a ring which played on a bar set in front of the shelf on which the volumes stood. This bar was kept in place by rather an elaborate system of iron work attached to the end of the book-case and was secured by a lock which often required two keys.

The appearance of these books on the shelves was decidedly striking. Some volumes, which had more elaborate bindings, were protected at the corners by heavy bosses, which prevented their standing side by side on the shelves and so were laid on the desks. Others stood upright as in our modern libraries, but instead of being placed on the shelves with their backs in view as in the libraries of today they were thrust in back first thus leaving the free edge exposed; this was due to the fact that the chain which fastened the book to the shelf was attached to the middle of the edge of the upper right hand corner of the book.

The contents of these old monastic libraries were made up of works of theology, geography, grammar, rhetoric, treatises on medicine and works of all the Greek and Latin classics. These works, which were about the same as are to be found on the shelves of a library of the nineteenth century, were roughly classified and were arranged alphabetically by author under their respective classes. Often the shelves of the cases were numbered and sometimes a list of those books which were to be found on that set of shelves was fastened at the end of the case. On the cases in some Mediaeval libraries there were placed busts of the authors whose works were to be found in that case. Again inscriptions appropriate to that subject to which the books on the

The arrangement of the books on the shelves.

The contents of the monastic libraries.



shelves were related were recorded at the top of the book-case.

Monks were by no means negligent in the care of their books. According to one monastic rule no brother was allowed to be careless with any book taken by him from the library nor was he even allowed to leave it open in his cell when absent. That of the Citeaux directed that "if it be necessary to go any where the person to whom the book was entrusted should place it back in his drawer, or if he wished to leave it on his seat he should give a signal to the nearest brother to guard it during his absence." Sometimes it was the custom to insert in the volume a few lines of warning to those by whom the book would be used. Furthermore the monks carefully provided for their manuscripts cases and coverings, which rendered insects and age alike harmless by the strong odor of ointment of resin of the cedar tree and by the strong covers which the deer hide contributed.

The whole library was under the charge of the chantor or librarian, who was also the armarius or supervisor of the scriptorium, a combination which was probably due to the fact that the librarian was in correspondence with the custodians of the libraries of other monasteries and so was best able to judge what copies would prove to the best advantage in securing new books in exchange for duplicates of those in his own monastery. The chantor could neither sell nor pawn books excepting to neighboring churches, and could only lend the volumes when an equivalent pledge was given. When a book was highly prized the chantor could not lend it without the express sanction of the prior. It was furthermore the duty of the chantor to apply labels to the books, to catalogue the volumes and to go over them two or three times a year to see that they were not crowded and that every book

The care exercised by the monks over their books.

The duties of the chantor or librarian.



was in its right place. In the case of the loan he had to record the borrower's address, title and the deposit received which was usually equal to the value of the book.

In the general outline of the monastic libraries from their beginning until the time when the collection of books numbered into the thousands, no mention has been made of the individual libraries. The following descriptions of these libraries are the only ones which have been given with any detail by any of the authorities. Although the Eastern monks were not particularly interested in libraries there was a collection of books in Abyssinia. This library consisted of a room about twenty-six feet long, twenty feet wide and twelve feet high. The roof was formed of trunks of trees across which reeds were laid which supported the mass of earth and plaster of which the terrace room was composed. The interior of the walls was plastered white with lime; the windows were at a good height from the ground and were unglazed but were defended with bars of iron wood. A wooden shelf carved in Egyptian style ran around the room at the height of the top of the door and on this shelf were sundry bottles, platters and dishes for the use of the community. Underneath this shelf there were various long wooden pegs projecting from the wall, each about a foot and a half long, on which hung the Abyssinian manuscripts. These books were bound in the usual way, sometimes in red leather and sometimes in wooden boards which were occasionally elaborately carved in rude and coarse devices. The book was then enclosed in a case and tied up with leather thongs. To this case was attached a strap for convenience of carrying the volume over the shoulder and by these straps the books were hung on the wooden pegs described above, there usually being three on a peg but there were sometimes more when the books

The Library  
of  
Abyssinia.



were small. the books were written on vellum in ink made of lamp-black, gum and water, which gave a jet black effect and retained its color forever.

Another library in the East was that of Meteora where the books were kept in cases in low vaulted and secret rooms concealed in a kind of a mezzanine floor the entrance to which was through a door at the back of a closet in an outer chamber. This collection consisted of 2,000 volumes only a few hundred of which were manuscripts, the rest being printed books of the sixteenth century.

Among the earliest and largest libraries in the West was that of Isidore, Bishop of Seville in the seventh century. This library contained fourteen cases or armaria which were ornamented with busts and inscribed with a series of verses which concluded with the following words addressed "ad interventorem" ("to a talkative intruder")

Non partitus quemquam coram se scriba loquentem

Non est hic quod agas gamle perge foras.

("The scribe allows no one to speak in his presence; there is nothing for you to do here chatter-box; you had better go outside") Such an inscription might not be inappropriate in some of our modern libraries.

Another large and important library in the West is that of Titchfield Abbey founded in the thirteenth century. It contained in all three hundred and twenty-six volumes, sixty-eight being works of theology; thirty-seven of canon and civil law; twenty-nine of medicine, and thirty-seven of art. The books were arranged in four cases; two (the first and second) on the eastern side of the room, the third on the southern and the

The library of Meteora.

The collection of Isidore of Seville.

Library of Titchfield Abbey.



fourth on the northern side. Each case had eight shelves marked with a letter and number fixed as the number of each shelf. Certain letters as A H K L M O P Q, had no numbers affixed because all the volumes to which one of these letters belonged were contained on the shelf to which that letter was assigned. Certain numbered letters were given to each volume in the library and these letters were marked on the first leaf of the book and on the shelf belonging to the book. The marking of the shelves, the inscriptions in the books and the references in the register all agreed.

Another library of some repute was that of Clairvaux a Cistercian house, which was in prominence during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. In this library on the same floor with the cloister there were fourteen studies or carrels which formed the scriptorium. Over the scriptorium and connected with it by a spiral staircase was the library containing books on all subjects beautifully written by hand and richly illuminated. The library occupied a room one hundred and eighty-nine feet long and twelve feet wide, which contained forty eight seats or desks with four shelves to each desk.

Library of  
Clairvaux.

The library of Wimborne Abbey, another of the Western libraries, was founded in 1686, consisted of two hundred and forty manuscripts and was contained in one room over the sacristy. Here the volumes were arranged on shelves erected against the walls of the room. The books were fastened to the cases by chains three feet long formed of rod-iron bent into a figure eight with one end twisted round the middle to make it strong. Desks and chairs were placed within three feet of the bookcases so that the books could be taken to the desk without unfastening the chains. This collection consisted of books of theology, classical

The library  
of  
Wimborne  
Abbey.



works, lexicans and books written in Eastern tongues.

Following are a number of libraries of some importance, but of which very little description is given: Christ Church, Canterbury founded in the fourteenth century occupying a room sixty feet by twenty two feet and containing six-hundred and ninety-eight volumes; a Benedictine library in Paris which in 1513 occupied the south walk of the cloister but which was moved in 1723 to the west side where it occupied three rooms and consisted of about forty-nine thousand printed books and seven thousand manuscripts; the library of the Pomposa monastery near Ravenna, which was collected by Abbot Jerome in 1093 and which was said to have been the finest collection in Italy at that time; the library of Monte Cassino where the collection was a result of researches in Italy of the African Constantine, who after having passed forty years in the East studying the scientific treatises of Egypt, Persia, Chaldea and India, went to the monastery of St Benedict at Monte Cassino where he assumed the monastic habit and endowed the monastery with the books collected in his wanderings; St Omer, the Abbey of St Bertin, once the abode of St Thomas à Becket, which contained one thousand manuscripts and was made up of various ecclesiastical libraries. This library at the suggestion of the Record Commission established in France in 1750, transcribed all its ancient charters into ten large folio volumes with drawings of the seals the whole being signed by notaries after their collation with the originals. The volumes were sold for waste paper during the Revolution and a portion of the original charters and bulk one believed to have been buried in a chest in the foundations of the Abbey of St Josse; Sarbonne, dating from 1290, which included one-thousand and seventeen volumes, which were catalogued and arranged into a few general classes. In the

Libraries of  
Christ Church  
Benedict of Paris  
Pomposa  
Monte Cassino  
St Omer  
Sarbonne



catalogue under each class was the author's name and the title of the book followed by a few words of the beginning of the text. Here differing from most libraries of the Mediaeval times the volumes were freely lent to anyone who deposited in gold an amount somewhat more than the value of the book or some valuable work under oath to return the borrowed book.

These different monastic libraries carried on with each other a correspondence and an exchange of books, which in not a few cases as in that of St Josse-Sur-Mer, in the ninth century, finally developed into what was practically a booktrade.

From the list of libraries given above it will be seen that monastic libraries sprang up in many parts of Europe and of Western Asia, and it will also be seen how it was possible for them to form the nuclei for many of the great European libraries of today, for toward the end of the Middle Ages most of the monastic libraries were transferred to the universities, in many cases the university libraries being modelled directly after the monastic libraries.

Although the value of the monastery libraries was exceedingly great from the standpoint of the formation of modern libraries, this value is equaled and possibly overshadowed by the great service done to the world of universal literature in the preservation of the epics and writings of early writers. Hence it is that these libraries beginning with the dawn of the Christian era have preserved for modern civilization literary treasures of inestimable value, and have given to the modern world the idea of one of its greatest institutions - the library.

Exchange of books carried on among monastic libraries developed into a booktrade.

Monastic libraries formed the nuclei for many of the great European libraries of today.

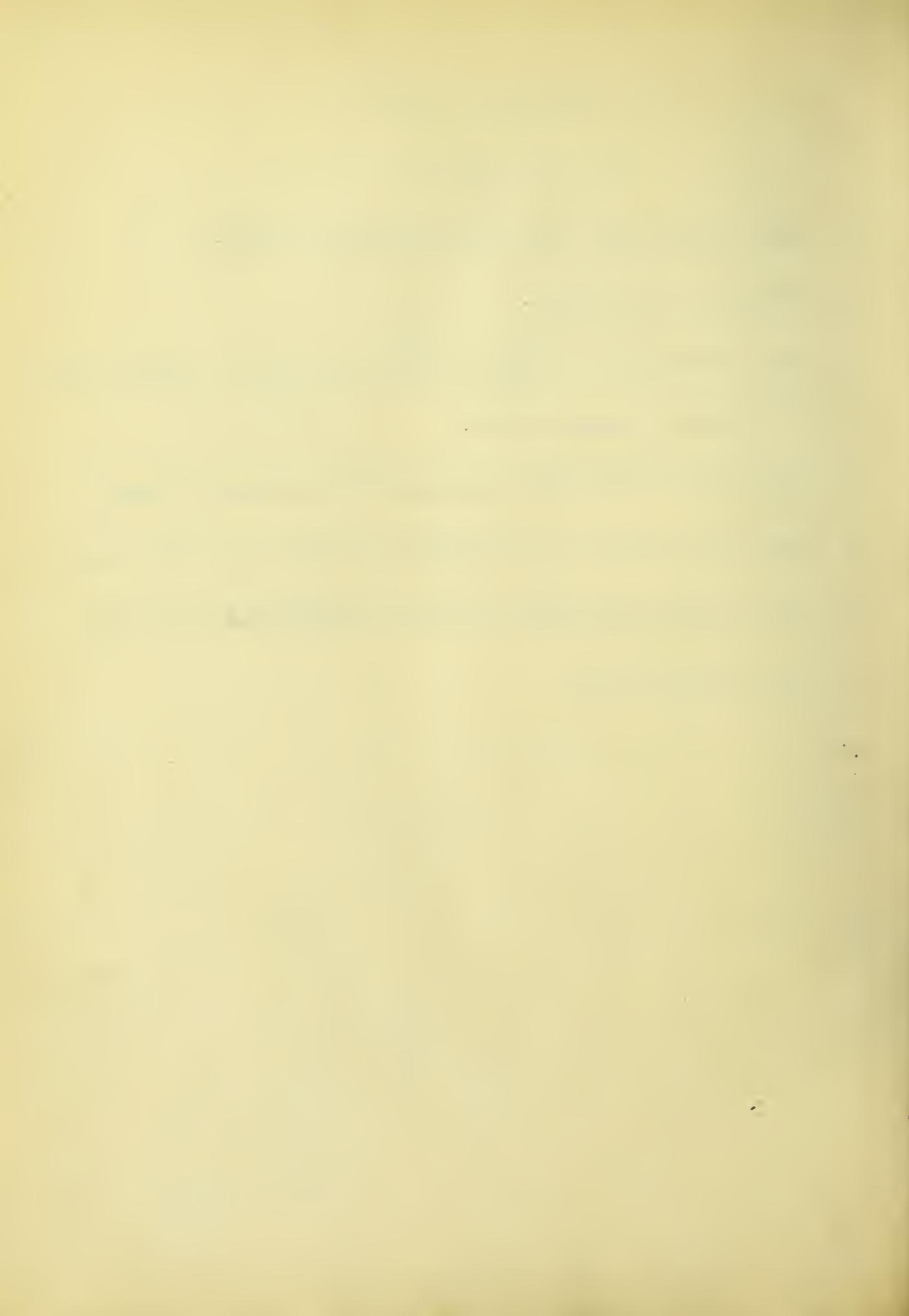
Monastic libraries preserved the epics and writings of early writers.



## -:- Q U E S T I O N S -:-

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- 1 What was the first type of the monastic library?
- 2 Describe a scriptorium.
- 3 Give a description of the interior of a monastic library after it occupied a separate room.
- 4 Tell how the books were arranged in the monastic library.
- 5 Trace the process of book making as carried on by the monks.
- 6 What two great services did ancient monasteries render to modern civilization?



## READING LIST ON MONASTIC LIBRARIES.

Blades, William.

Books in chains. 232 p. N.Y. A.C. Armstrong. 1892. \$1.25

An account of the early chained books with a list of the libraries which are still in chains.

Clark, John Willis.

Libraries in the mediaeval and renaissance periods. 61 p.  
illus. N.Y. Macmillan. 1894. \$1.00

A vivid and exhaustive account of the interior of a monastic library during the Middle Ages, together with a description of the most important libraries of the monks.

Curzon, Robert.

Ancient monasteries of the East. 390 p. N.Y. Barnes & Co.  
1854. \$1.50.

An account of some of the most curious manuscripts in the East with the description of some of the largest and most important of the Eastern monastic libraries.

Cutts, Edward L.

Monks of the Middle Ages. (see Art Journal, Sept. 1858, 8:285-7,  
358-60.)

A brief, concise history of the development of monasticism together with a full and vivid description of the conventional buildings.

Elton, Charles Isaac & Mary Augusta.

Great book-collectors. 228 p. illus. N.Y. Scribner's Sons.  
1893. \$2.50.



"Deals with the book-collector of Ireland, England, Italy and Germany as distinguished from the owner of good books, librarians and merchants of books, avoiding as much as possible the description of particular books." Preface.

Hill, O'Dell Travers.

English monasticism; its rise and progress. 459 p. Lond. Jackson, Walford & Hodder. 1867. \$1.75.

The history of the rise, growth and influence of English monachism and a description of the art of transcribing and illuminating manuscripts.

Jackson, T. G.

Libraries of the Middle Ages. (see Journal of the Royal institute of British architects. Aug. 1898, 5:365.)

A description of monastery libraries in general, taking up their contents and their arrangement.

Jameson, Mrs Anna Bronnell (Murphy)

Legends of monastic orders as represented in fine arts. 489 p. Bost. Ticknor & Fields. 1865. \$1.50.

Gives the reader a general view of various orders with a bibliographical sketch of their founders.

Libraries of the Middle Ages and their contents. (see Catholic World, 1872, 5:397.)

Gives a general view of monastic libraries with a description of their contents and their arrangement.

McGiffert, A. C.

Monachism. (see Encyclopaedia Britannica, 5:843-47.)

A history of the monastic orders from their rise to their fall.



Madan, Falconer.

Books in manuscript. 188 p. illus. Lond. Paul, French, Trübner & Co. 1893. \$2.50.

A plain account of the study and use of manuscripts, including a history of the art of transcribing and illuminating manuscripts and a description of some of the famous monastic libraries.

Middleton, James Henry.

Illuminated manuscripts in classical and mediaeval times. Lond. Cambridge University Press. 1892. \$2.50.

A history of the art of illuminating manuscripts, with a description of the scriptorium and monastic libraries of the Middle Ages.

Monastic libraries. (see Larned History for ready reference & topical reading, 3:2006-8.)

Contains a description of monastic libraries in general together with a description of the largest and most important early monastic libraries.

Monks & civilization. (see American Catholic quarterly review. July 1886, 11:597-612.)

A description of the monastic scriptorium and an account of the work carried on there by the early monks.

Monks & schoolmen of the Middle Ages. (see Dublin review, June 1851, 30:275-331.)

A description of the art of transcribing manuscripts during the Middle Ages.



Phillips, Sir Thomas.

Observations on some monastic libraries & archives in French Flanders. (see Royal society of literature of the United Kingdom, Transactions, v. 2.)

An account of several of the most important monastic libraries in French Flanders.

Putnam, George Haven.

Books in manuscript. (see his Books and their makers during the Middle Ages. 1896. Pt. I. v.1:31-313.)

A history of the work and influence of the monastic scriptorium during the mediaeval times together with a description of the earlier monastery schools and libraries.

Rudolph, Suffield R.

Monastic reminiscences. (see Modern review, April 1881, 2:347-67.)

An account of the daily life of the monk and a full description of the monastic church.

Services of the monastic order. (see Christian examiner, July 1867, n.s. 4:63-78.)

An account of the kind of books the monks transcribed, and the works they collected for their libraries.

Taylor, Isaac.

History of the transmission of ancient books to the modern times. Lond. Simpkin. 1875. 3 s. 6 d.

Tells how the monks preserved the literature of the early writers by transcribing and collecting the works of the old classic authors.



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The monastic scriptorium. (see The Library, April 1890, 2:237-44, 282-91.)

A full description of the monastic scriptorium of the Middle Ages.

(a) visit to an English monastery. (see Chamber's Edinburgh Journal, 1851, 16:337-9.)

A full description of the daily life of the monks together with a clear description of their conventional buildings.

Woodhouse, F. C.

Monasticism, ancient & modern. 418 p. Lond. Gardner. 1896. 7s. 6d.

A history of monasticism from its rise to its fall, including the rule of St Benedict and an account of the art of transcribing introduced by the Benedictines and carried on by all succeeding orders.





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